

Simple Stuff Simpler Times Are Coming?

By Bob Vitrikas

I was driving down Rt 29 into C'ville this morning and noticed a modern day BMW 3 series that was smoking profusely from the tailpipe. Not typical BMW behavior! Could have been worn valve guides or piston rings or who knows what. A Rivian pulled up next to it and it started me thinking about how far we've come and what the future holds regarding vehicle maintenance and reliability.



Back in the not so good old days, automotive maintenance was intense. Let's use my 1955 MG TF 1500 as a reference. Check the oil level every 250 miles. Remember when road tests included gas mileage AND oil consumption? Some new cars don't even have an oil dipstick! TF oil changes are recommended every 3,000 miles. Now we have a reminder on the dash when oil changes are needed which can stretch to over 10,000 miles. The MG's chassis needed greasing every 500 miles. Today's cars don't even have grease fittings! The owner's manual on my TF recommends removing, cleaning and refilling the shock absorbers every 12,000 miles. When is the last time you did it on your modern ride? In the 1920s and 1930s gasoline was so bad the cylinder heads needed to be removed and de-coked every 12,000 miles. Ugh! If you got 50,000 miles between engine overhauls you were doing great.

Fast forward to today and we find trips to the car hospital far less frequent. In 116,000 miles of driving my Chrysler Pacifica (yes we own a minivan, there I've said it) has required one set of tires, batteries have been replaced (there are two of them) and a set of windshield wipers. And I get 28 mpg on regular gas on trips. Wow that's what I call improvement!

New car warranties? The Maxwell Motor Company, predecessor to Chrysler, offered a 90 day warranty but customers had to bring the broken part to the Maxwell factory at their expense. Jack Benny would not have liked that! By 1925 Maxwell was out of business. By the middle 1920s Ford provided a 90 day warranty for parts and a 30 day warranty for labor on cars sold in the U.S.. World War II brought great progress in vehicle reliability due to advances in metallurgy, oil and gasoline quality, fuel and ignition systems and electrical components. In 1961 Ford provided Lincoln owners one year 12,000 mile warranty and doubled down on that in 1962. In the mid 1960s Chrysler countered with a five-year 50,000 mile warranty. Today Hyundai provides a 5 year 60,000 mile bumper to bumper warranty and 10 year/100,000 mile powertrain warranty. Extended warranties are readily available.

With the advent of electric vehicles the future looks even brighter. OK please can the sarcastic remarks about spontaneous combustion. Electric vehicles don't have engines that require maintenance. They only have one moving part and that doesn't rub on anything to cause wear. I guess there must be a bearing in there somewhere in the drivetrain and wheels and of course there are lots of electronics to potentially cause problems. Time will tell how this all shakes out but it looks like there are plenty of advantages besides not having to buy expensive gas, reducing air pollution etc, etc. Looking to future, Tesla promises a battery life of eight years and up to 150,000 miles with at least 70% of battery life remaining. Impressive if these predictions are accurate. Tesla has a reputation for over promising and under delivering...

Hmm, is there an electric vehicle in your future? MG will offer an electric car this summer. You can read this article in Hemmings on line.

<https://www.hemmings.com/stories/2024-mg-cyberster-sports-car/#:~:text=The MG Cyberster will hit,left-hand-drive versions.>

If you want a Jaguar with an internal combustion engine you better hurry because 2024 is the last year they will offer one. Yikes!

Are simpler times coming?



The MG Cyberster is a sharp looking vehicle but don't look to buy one in the U.S..